

## **Virginia National Guard Tuition Assistance Waiver**

**OBJECTIVE:** To ensure Virginia's continued investment and commitment to the men and women of the Virginia National Guard by offering an easily usable tuition voucher for state schools in Virginia.

### **BACKGROUND:**

1. The Virginia National State Tuition Assistance Program (STAP) is a long standing benefit for the National Guard Members which provided tuition, up to a certain amount, for eligible NG members.
2. In 2021 the STAP program changed to a reimbursement model causing confusion and frustration as substantial costs were shifted to SM's that now required them to pay up front and request reimbursement at the conclusion of the semester.
3. In 2021 the law change eliminated the VNG's ability to enter into agreement with schools to offer in-state tuition for those SM's who live outside Virginia but belong to the Virginia National Guard. This was the first time that Virginia Guard members who live out of state were subjected, by default, to out of state tuition rates. In 2022 the legislature adjusted the requirement to require two years of out of state tuition payments before they could qualify for in-state tuition.

### **DISCUSSION:**

1. The National Guard performs a critical and essential role in both service to the Commonwealth and to the Nation.
2. Virginia competes with surrounding states to attract talent to their National Guard.
3. The competitive landscape extends to civilian employers many of which offer substantial education assistance.
4. The National Guard is a tremendous net-positive contributor to the Commonwealth in terms of resources. The Guard receives a 26X multiplier in federal dollars to every state dollar allocated to the organization.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Provide a tuition waiver system for all eligible Virginia National Guard SM's to attend a state school in the Commonwealth.